

Ducklings in break-out for spring

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Muscovy ducks have hatched in Ely. WHO could not adore these tiny ducklings taking their first steps along the riverbank this spring?

Quite a few people, in fact.

These are the muscovy ducks which have been causing quite a flap in Ely.

While some residents could not be happier to see the muscovies waddling along the city's streets, others are fed up with the obese ducks fouling pavements, aggressively foraging for food and almost causing traffic accidents by walking in the middle of the road.

After receiving more than 100 complaints last year about the birds, East Cambridgeshire District Council began oiling the muscovy eggs with chemicals to kill the unborn ducklings.

The move caused a storm of controversy, with dozens of readers contacting the News to complain about the extermination tactics.

However, one firm duck fan is Ely resident Karen Goodkind, who took these pictures while she was walking along the River Ouse.

She said: "Muscovy ducks are beautiful birds - gentle, trusting and proud. I think they represent all the joys of spring.

"As I watched and photographed them, one mother was quite content to allow her young to come right up to where I lay taking photographs. Their mother was incredibly trusting. At one point I was about 20cm away and her young ducklings then began walking underneath my tripod and beside my legs.

"Even when I lay on the floor they quite happily walked alongside my body without any concern. It was a truly wonderful experience."

But the council is sticking by its oiling methods, insisting action is needed to maintain a diverse mix of birds on Ely's riverbank.

It claims too many muscovies could endanger the survival of other duck species due to their voracious appetite and rampant breeding.

Liz Knox, head of the council's environmental health team, told the News: "Because of the over population of muscovies, it is not giving other ducks the chance to thrive - we have to ensure a managed duck population by the river. We don't want to totally wipe out the muscovies but we do want to see a healthier variety of ducks."

To view more of Karen's pictures, go to www.nerakart.co.uk